

# Smart screens

Modernizing access  
by Cynthia Brown

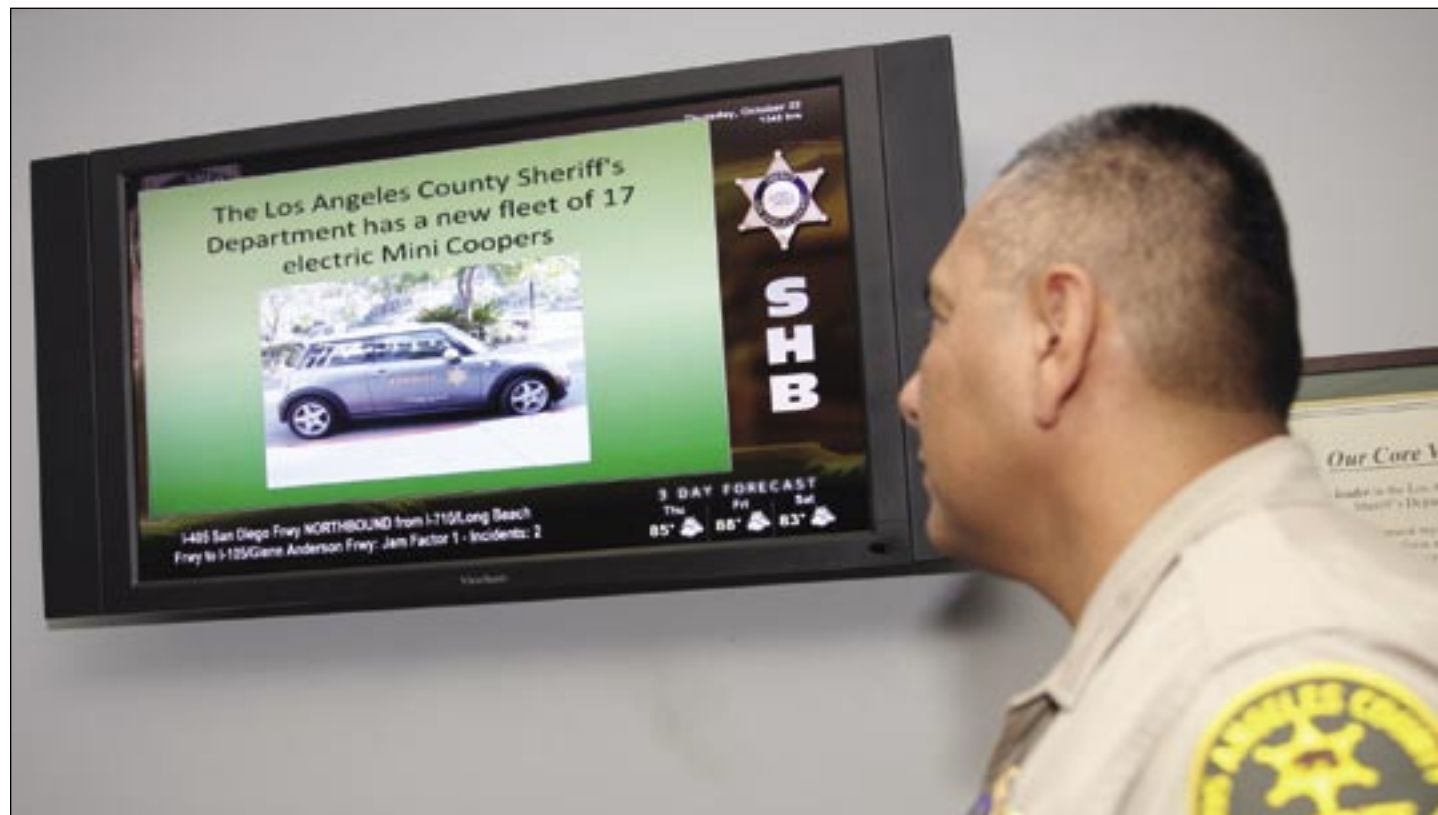
**N**ever has there been a larger generation gap than in the way people of different ages get their information.

If you're 40 or older, you might remember post-it notes, mimeographs and something called a fax machine. But if you don't have a gray hair anywhere on your body, you're probably more comfortable with IMs, Google apps and Twitter feeds.

In terms of law enforcement, with particular regard to the way law enforcement officers get their basic information, the days of pieces of paper tacked to a bulletin board are numbered.

And with the amount of information cops are receiving these days as opposed to times past, the death of the post-it note might be a very good thing.

The fact is that the people who enforce our laws are on information overload. Get-



Getting information out to the troops in a digital format has helped the LA County Sheriff's Department improve communications with the far-flung workforce and keep the message consistent. Photo courtesy Jaime Lopez, LASD.

ting officers the information they need in terms of briefings and other functions used to be a time-consuming and largely disorganized process. But Sheriff Lee Baca of the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department is pretty sure he's found a better way to disseminate the enormous volume of information to his troops.

Baca is known as an in-

novator, and technology is a big part of his master plan. "We must stay ahead of the trends, not be dragged along by them," Baca told *American Police Beat* in a recent interview.

Rapid, coordinated communications are critical in law enforcement. And for a large, mobile workforce like the LA County Sheriff's Department – an agency that serves over ten million residents within a 4,084 square-mile area – that's a serious challenge.

Helping the LASD meet that challenge is a new digital communications system from a company called Helius which has streamlined operations in the Sheriff's Department.

The system is capable of providing a unique combination of digital signage, on-demand training, and internal communications in an all-in-one package. As part of the flexible digital signage solution, the LASD has deployed over 100 video screens in high-traffic areas at over 55 separate locations, including patrol stations and jail facilities.

"Sheriff Baca wanted a way to efficiently communicate key messages to our

staff," said Victor Rampulla, a division director with the LASD's Administrative Services Division.

"What we got was a state-of-the-art system where we can convey command information instantly, provide training that's convenient for a staff that's constantly

bulletins, descriptions of suspects, and areas that have hot spots of crime. In addition, each screen has the capacity to display information that focuses on the employees and residents of a particular station and neighborhood.

Perhaps the most exciting aspect of the new communications system is its potential in terms of in-service training. The LASD's Digital Briefing Board will enable the department to provide training for employees whenever and wherever it's needed on a variety of topics.

"This technology has enabled us to present information using a method similar to PowerPoint slides as well as videos," noted Captain Mike Parker, the unit commander of Sheriff's Headquarters Bureau.

"We're getting information out there about special events and positive news stories and it's in a format that all personnel, especially our younger employees, respond to."

"We know that we're just scratching the surface in leveraging this kind of powerful communications system," said Sgt. Rich Pena.

**We know that we're just scratching the surface in leveraging this kind of powerful communications system. Every week we're figuring out how to take it to a higher level.**

on the move, and share our department philosophy as well as news and announcements to our employees. This digital briefing board has really changed the way we communicate."

The system keeps employees informed and makes the vast organization feel smaller and more intimate.

It's now easy to get out department-wide news, issue periodic messages from the Sheriff, and make announcements in a timely manner about events like fundraisers or a downed officer's memorial ride.

The system provides critical information like crime



With the volume of information police officers must be able to access in the modern world, cork boards and chalk boards are rapidly becoming obsolete as technology advances.